CLAIMS

The invention claimed is:

1.   A computer system for presenting related items in a universal data store to a user, the system comprising:

a universal data store containing a plurality of items stored in accordance with a universal data schema and containing relational information corresponding to at least a portion of said plurality of items, wherein the relational information allows relationships between two or more of the plurality of items to be determined; and

a shell for presenting said plurality of items to a user, wherein the shell is configured to present a selected item to a user and is further configured to utilize said relational information to present one or more items in said data store which are related to said selected item.

2.   The computer system of Claim 1, wherein the relational information corresponding to one or more of said plurality of items includes a set of item characteristics.

3.   The computer system of Claim 2, wherein said shell is configured to present one or more of said set of item characteristics to a user.

4.   The computer system of Claim 2, wherein said shell is configured to accept a user input representing a selection to view one or more items in the data store having one of said item characteristics.

5. The computer system of Claim 2, wherein said shell is configured to present one or more items in the data store which share one of said item characteristics.

6. The computer system of Claim 1, wherein the shell is configured to present at least a portion of said relational information.

7. The computer system of Claim 1, wherein the shell is configured to accept a user input representing a selection to view items in the data store which are related to said selected item.

8. The computer system of Claim 7, wherein said relational information corresponding to the selected item includes a set of item characteristics associated with the selected item and wherein said user input represents a selection to view one or more items in the data store which share one of said set of item characteristics with the selected item.

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9.   A computer-implemented method for presenting related items in a universal data store to a user, the method comprising:

accessing data in said universal data store, wherein said universal data store stores a plurality of items in accordance with a universal data schema, and wherein at least a portion of said plurality of items contain relational information which allows relationships between said plurality of items to be determined;

utilizing said relational information to determine a relationship between a selected item and one or more of the items containing said relational information in the data store; and

displaying said selected item and one or more related items to the user.

10.   The method of Claim 9, wherein the displaying of said selected item and one or more related items includes displaying at least a portion of said relational information to a user.

11.   The method of Claim 9, wherein said method further comprises receiving a user input representing a selection to view one or more items in the data store which are related to said selected item.

12.   The method of Claim 11, wherein the displaying of said selected item and one or more related items is responsive to said input.

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